



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

BOBBY JINDAL
GOVERNOR

PEGGY M. HATCH
SECRETARY

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Contact: Greg Langley

Telephone: 225-219-3964

Calcasieu Parish couple arrested for knowingly violating environmental permit

BATON ROUGE – Today investigators with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality’s Criminal Investigation Division arrested a Calcasieu Parish couple on 15 felony violations of Louisiana’s Water Control Law. Ronnie LaRocca, 54, and Katherine LaRocca, 51, residing at 2530 Carlo Henry Road, own and operate Oak Forest Mobile Home Park on La. 3059 east of La. 171 in Lake Charles. The LaRoccas are alleged to have knowingly violated their water discharge permit issued by DEQ over the past four years when they failed to sample sewage treatment plant discharges from their mobile home park and submit quarterly monitoring reports to DEQ.

Under Louisiana’s Water Control Law, a business owner who has a sewage treatment plant that discharges to state waters is required to obtain a Louisiana Water Discharge Elimination System permit from DEQ. Under the terms and conditions of these permits, business owners are required to periodically sample the discharges and submit the sample results to DEQ in the form of discharge monitoring reports. Knowingly violating a DEQ water discharge permit is a felony.

The LaRoccas and Oak Forest Mobile Home Park have been permitted by DEQ since 1997. In 2006, DEQ began conducting Sanitary Wastewater Assistance Training classes for individuals and small businesses who were unfamiliar with the DEQ regulations regarding water discharge permits. In October 2010, Katherine LaRocca attended the DEQ sponsored compliance assistance training on behalf of Oak Forest Mobile Home Park and promised future compliance with the permit. The LaRoccas have not submitted discharge monitoring reports to DEQ since.

“The waters of Louisiana are among our state’s most important natural resources and their continued protection is a vital concern to the citizens and DEQ,” said Jeffrey Nolan, manager of DEQ-CID. “DEQ-CID will continue to investigate and seek criminal prosecution of owners or operators of sewage treatment systems who knowingly violate the law.”

Violations of Louisiana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System, upon conviction, can result in a fine of not less than \$5,000, but no more than \$50,000 per day of violation, or imprisonment for not more than three years, with or without hard labor, or both per count.

The mission of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality is to protect the environment and public health. Any persons with knowledge of any spills, releases, odors, fish kills, open burning, waste tires and any other types of environmental incidents may contact the department at 225-219-3640 or toll-free at 1-888-763-5424.

An arrest does not constitute guilt in a criminal case and all subjects are presumed innocent. All evidence compiled during the investigation is presented to the area prosecutors who determine if formal charges are warranted.